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Rex E. Marsh

University of California, Davis

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OPENING REMARKS - FIFTH VERTEBRATE PEST CONFERENCE

REX E. MARSH, Associate Specialist, Department of Animal Physiology. University of California,
Davis, California

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the Fifth Vertebrate Pest Conference. It has been 10 years since the first Conference was held in Sacramento in February of 1962. The attendance has grown at each successive conference and, from the looks of the audience this morning, we shall surpass all previous records. It would, however, be wrong to judge the significance of this conference on attendance alone, for we are equally or more concerned with the quality of the conference and its ultimate contribution to the specialized area of wildlife management.

The Conference is sponsored by the California Vertebrate Pest Committee, comprised primarily of individuals from the California Department of Agriculture, the University of California (Davis Campus), the U. S. Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife (Divisions of Wildlife Services and Wildlife Research), the California Departments of Public Health, Fish and Game, and Water Resources, and the California Association of County Agricultural Commissioners.

This Conference would not be possible if it were not for the cooperative efforts of many. I think it is a great tribute to the Conference to have noted scientists willing to travel across the nation, from Canada, and from abroad to participate in the program without financial remuneration of any sort from the Conference and frequently at considerable personal expense.

Vertebrate pests present complex problems with many ramifications. How, for example, can a certain species be benefited or protected because of its aesthetic, recreational or other values under one set of circumstances and rigidly managed under a different situation where a population severely conflicts with man's interests or well being? The solution can be made simple if we answer only half of the total question and ignore the other half by purposeful rationalization. If we attempt to strive to achieve both aspects of the question with equal dedication, using sound biological principles, complications quickly become apparent.

The solution must lie in balanced and acceptable compromises to best benefit man. Such compromises will require the greatest expertise available, and never has the need for expertise in vertebrate pest problems been greater than it is today.

Since the beginning, man has constantly struggled for food and the other necessities of life, always in competition with higher animals. And today, as the human population continues to grow at an alarming rate, the need for increasing amounts of food, fiber and other renewable natural resources will continue to place greater emphasis on the protection of such commodities from destruction by vertebrate pests both while being produced and when in storage.

This is not a prediction, but a reality, for it has become obvious in recent years that increased interest is being given to problems of vertebrate pests all over the world, particularly in the developing countries. Socio-economic progress throughout the world will require greater knowledge for resolving problems of pests which conflict with man's interests and well being.

It is the hope of the sponsoring committee that this Conference will serve to expand knowledge so that vertebrate pest-related problems may be intelligently resolved.